

# Forced to Choose Between Her Two "Ideal" Husbands!



Henry Curtis, the Husband Who Was Thought Dead and Who Won His Wife Back.

**The Unique Dilemma Which Confronted Pretty Little Mrs. Curtis —Just as It Might Have the Heroine of the Famous "Enoch Arden."**



Mrs. Henry Curtis-Peel-Curtis, the Heroine of a Very "Different" Enoch Arden Romance.

**And How Mr. Curtis —Quite Unlike Enoch Arden— Wooed and Won Her Back from the Old Suitor Who Had Married Her Thinking Her a War Widow**



Eugene Peel, Who Married Mrs. Curtis, Believing, as She Did, That Her First Husband Was Dead.

**P**RETTY little Mrs. Henry Curtis, of Carthage, Missouri, has just passed through one of the most puzzling, embarrassing and generally unique experiences a girl has ever had to undergo. Mrs. Curtis had to choose between two husbands—not other women's husbands! That, in these days, would perhaps not be so unusual. No. Each was her own husband, married in perfectly good faith and both of them well loved.

Indeed, that was one of the things that made the problem so distressing. For, as Mrs. Curtis says, "each one of my husbands was ideal!"

The reasons for Mrs. Curtis's predicament were precisely those embalmed to posterity in that famous idyll of Tennyson's "Enoch Arden." Poor Enoch, it will be remembered, wooed and won his village sweetheart; then went to sea, was cast away and after a decent lapse of time Anne Lee, his wife, thinking him dead, married an older suitor.

And Arden, returning, peeping through the cottage window, saw them together, realized the situation and determined, as Tennyson sings, "Not to tell her, never to let her know."

And disappeared silently into the night. Mrs. Curtis's "Enoch Arden" did not elect to disappear into the night!

Instead, he stayed and won his wife back again. How he did it and the progress of the whole affair make one of those romances that are usually seen only in the movies, but, when occurring in real life, have all the enthralling interest of flesh and blood over canvas, screen and shadow.

It was six years ago that Esther Warren, young, attractive, well born and of a family accounted wealthy in Carthage, was the belle of her city. Rich miners from the zinc fields—for Carthage is in the world's greatest zinc centre—country swains and men from the big cities on visits to the properties that netted them millions, paid court to her. Among her suitors were two upon whom she smiled

most frequently: One, Eugene Peel, and another, some years younger than he, Henry Curtis.

And after a while the girl's heart turned to the latter. Peel, wishing them all luck, but no longer contented to dwell in a place that could hold for him hereafter only sorrowful memories, went to Kansas City.

All went well with the young Curtises for a little more than a year and then the world war broke out. From the beginning Curtis was unhappy.

"I must do my bit," he said.

"But you are an American, and what about me?" she asked.

"What about the wives of all those who are fighting?" he replied.

A little longer Curtis stayed. And then, seeing that his desire to take part in the fight was too great to be borne, his wife let him go. He donned the Canadian uniform in 1915, and in less than two months was sent to Belgium. His first letters to the waiting little woman in Carthage were filled with cheer and courage and vivid accounts of the nobility of the service.

And then came letters telling her of the hardships he was suffering and how he longed to return to their little rose-covered nest in Carthage.

There came a time when weeks went by without a letter from him. And then, after the second battle of Mons, she received from the British Government a brief message saying that her husband had been gassed and had died in a hospital in France!

For many days after the news had come to her, the shades of what had been her love nest were tightly drawn and for long, Mrs. Curtis closed herself there and mourned the loss of the man who had held what he thought his duty greater than their love. And only after long, sad weeks did she appear on the streets of Carthage in the sombre black of the widow.

Peel, learning of what had happened, hurried from his offices in Kansas City to extend her sympathy and, if he could, help. And the first sight of his old sweetheart fanned his love flame up afresh. He stayed in Carthage, courting her cautiously, and after months of wooing she began to put aside her sombre garb for gay colors. The two were seen driving about the country roads in the moonlight. And at last, believing as did Peel, that Curtis was dead and buried in the soldier's grave in France, she felt her old interest reviving in the rejected suitor. In September, 1916, she became Mrs. Peel.

They went to Kansas City to live, taking quarters in the fashionable Metropole. Followed for the two, three full years of perfect wedded happiness.

It was in May, 1919, that Peel was forced to leave his wife and go to California. The stay proved longer than he had expected. But each day brought letters from Mrs. Peel telling of her loneliness and her love for him. The letters suddenly came not day by day, but weekly.

Then, after another month, they ceased altogether!

Although he had not completed his work in the West, Peel boarded a train bound for Kansas City to quiet the fear and doubt within his heart. Hurrying to the Metropole, he found to his amazement that Mrs. Peel not many days before had left there and had gone without leaving a forwarding address. For days the anxious husband

roamed the streets in search of his missing wife. A trip to the old home in Carthage did nothing more than to deepen the mystery. Mrs. Peel, so her mother said, had not written home for many weeks. Then, one day, while walking the Kansas City streets searching every face he passed, his quest came abruptly and amazingly to an end.

He stood face to face not only with his

missing wife, but with the husband whose place he had taken and whose body should have been nothing but bones in the soldier's grave in France!

"Esther!" was all that Peel could say.

"I could not help it, Gene," she said.

"When Harry came back to me I knew that I loved him more than I did you. And he is my husband!"

"It was not my fault, Peel," said Curtis.

"I was ill for months in the hospital. I was delirious and could not tell who I was. All my marks of identification had been lost and it was long before I had strength to move, or the will to do so. No one knew me and as I was missing the Army Bureau thought that I was dead. As soon as I could I came back to America to find my wife."

"I found her yours!"

"Yet, as I was not dead, she was still my wife. My love for her was as great as ever—greater, because I had been through the furnace of war, where unrealities are burned away and man learns to know the truth!"

And it appeared, unlike Enoch Arden, Curtis had determined to win back the wife he had so strangely lost. When he at first appeared Mrs. Peel, or Mrs. Curtis, had fainted at the shock. Then she had pleaded with him to leave her—to seek a divorce. Curtis refused, and during the weeks of Peel's absence he had wooed his wife just as he had in the old days before. At the last she had made her decision. The old love she had pledged six years before proved to be the stronger. She eloped with Curtis, her actual legal husband!

Peel for the second time stepped down and out of Esther's life, and gave her her freedom by suing for a divorce. The divorce was granted recently, and now fashionable Carthage is again swamping the togethery shops with orders for frocks to be worn at Mrs. Esther Curtis-Peel-Curtis's third wedding.

When Peel's divorce petition was taken before Judge Clarence A. Burney, the Judge, after reading the plea, scratched his judicial head and adjusted his judicial glasses.

"This is the most unique divorce plea ever brought before me," said the Judge. "It is my belief that it is not necessary for court proceedings to free Peel of his marriage obligations. However, I am going to grant the plaintiff a divorce. It may be that sometime during the years to come Peel may have a more fortunate matrimonial venture, and in that case it may ease the mind of the future Mrs. Peel to know that the present unhappy tangle has been legally and entirely straightened out."

To a representative of this magazine Mrs. Curtis-Peel-Curtis said:

"Few women have been called upon to select between two husbands as I have. In deciding my future I allowed only my heart to be my guide. I am sure that I love Henry more than I do Eugene. Both of my husbands have been ideal men, and I feel that I have had more than my share of happiness, because I have known each of these real men so intimately."

"Mr. Peel, in obtaining a divorce, again has proved his sterling character. There are men in the world who would have resorted to frauds or some other awful means to have solved their problem."

"Years ago, when I first met Mr. Curtis and Mr. Peel, my interest in both was evenly divided. Then there came that little something into my heart which made the scales balance in Mr. Curtis's favor. I realized I was in love with him. When I found that love for Mr. Curtis had crept into my life to replace our friendship I told Mr. Peel so. He immediately ceased his attentions and left Carthage so that I might be alone with my sweetheart."

"Of course, I was heartbroken when my

husband first suggested that he leave home and join the army, but after sober thinking, and realizing what a noble soul he was for gambling his life to do his part to free poor little Belgium, I was consoled. "Then came that awful death message. It was months before I realized that Henry was gone and that I was really a widow. Then came Mr. Peel with his expressions of sympathy. He was noble and did everything in his power, to cheer me."

"As the days slowly passed my heart became softened to my new protector. I knew that I could never love Mr. Peel as I had Henry, but I was young and felt that if my first husband could speak he would tell me to marry."

"After days of coaxing I finally decided to wed the second time. My honeymoon with Mr. Peel was ideal, and as I look back upon those days it seems as a dream. Then came the return of my real lover. I was swept from my feet. It was like meeting a dear one returned from the grave. He explained how the English Government had caused our peculiar situation. In my delight of seeing Henry I forgot Eugene!"

"Mr. Curtis and I finally decided to elope and get away from it all. I realize now that I should have written and told Mr. Peel of Mr. Curtis's return, but I feared what might follow. I decided upon the easiest way and disappeared with my real husband."

"Please say for me that Mr. Peel is indeed an ideal man and husband. I have nothing but fondest remembrances in my heart for him, and can truthfully say that he will make a perfect husband for any woman. I hope I shall always be his very dearest and sincere friend."

In his testimony in the Circuit Court when seeking a divorce, Peel told the jury that his wife's conduct during those short three years was perfect.



1. In the Old Days Curtis Won the Belle of Carthage from His Rival, Peel.



2. And They Were Married.



3. Curtis Enlisted With the Canadians When War Broke Out.



4. Mrs. Curtis Receives the News of His Death in France.



5. Peel Marries the Supposed Widow, After Courtship.



6. When, Unexpectedly, Curtis, Recovered, Comes Back.



7. Love for the First Husband Returns; the Second Goes.



8. And the Modern Enoch Arden Recovers by Divorce His Wife.